



Chippewa National Forest

Fact Sheet



Tribal Relations 2006 - 2009

Past

The Chippewa National Forest in northern Minnesota includes a unique situation within the National Forest System. Most of the Leech Lake Indian Reservation (90%) overlays the national forest. Land ownership within the boundaries is highly intermixed and direct ownership by the Leech Lake Band comprises about 5% of the lands. Trust responsibilities and treaty rights are common topics of discussion between our governments. Reservations in north-central Minnesota were created by a series of treaties in 1855, 1864 and 1867 and Executive Orders in 1873 and 1874. A Forest Reserve was created from ceded lands in 1902 and established as the Minnesota National Forest in 1908.

Historically, relations between the Band and the Forest have alternated between friendly or contentious. The Forest Service is aware that some of the tribal community will not be satisfied unless the lands within the tribal reservation have been restored to the Band. In recent years, the Band has focused on self-governance by taking on many program areas and budgets overseen by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Relations with the Band fluctuate whenever there is turnover in key positions. Tribal members elected a new Chair in December 2004, and three Tribal Council positions are due for election in June 2006. The Band established a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) in 1997 but no valid programmatic agreement existed between the Forest and Band to clarify protocol for either consultation under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act or government-to-government consultation on other issues. The Chippewa National Forest is in the process of establishing a Programmatic Agreement, and describing the role of a Tribal Liaison position in conjunction with the Band. In the interim, the Forest Supervisor acts a primary contact for government to government relations. The Chippewa Leadership Team and the Leech Lake Reservation Business Committee (Tribal Council) also met together in August 2005.

While ongoing consultation efforts are productive and the Forest has modified numerous planning and project proposals in response to tribal concerns, the Forest continues to struggle with perceptions of past actions.

2006

The Forest is conducting the following activities in conjunction with project planning and implementation:

- Quarterly meetings with the Band's Division of Resource Management director to identify issues and move forward on those where agreement exists.
- Contacting Local Indian Councils (15 exist) to discuss future planning and current implementation efforts and identify any historic sites or traditional uses within the project areas, or concerns with the projects.
- Providing a unique Traditional Resource Inventory program involving formal collection of information related to Traditional Cultural Properties. A GIS database is now available for use in project planning.

- Ongoing formal archeological surveys. Beginning in 1986, the Forest helped train LLBO staff to conduct these surveys. The Forest now contracts that work through the Band.

2007

The revised Forest Plan specifically addressed tribal relations and tribal rights in 2004. Chippewa National Forest changed Forest Supervisors in 2007. Tribal Council positions turned over by election in 2008. The Forest is conducting the following activities in 2007:

- More frequent (monthly) meetings with the Band's Division of Resource Management director to identify issues and move forward on those where agreement exists.
- Establishing a part-time Tribal Liaison position beginning April 2007.
- Ongoing discussion with Local Indian Councils (15 exist) on future planning and current implementation efforts and identification of any historic sites or traditional uses within the project areas, or concerns with the projects.
- With the LLBO and BIA, we helped identify FS roads for inclusion in the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) inventory. The IRR program is the tribal equivalent to the Federal Highways program and has excellent potential for new cooperation, maintenance and improvement of forest roads.
- The Chippewa hosted Susan Johnson, from Forest Service, Region 2 Tribal Relations, to help forest leaders and the LLBO better understand the Indian Dispute Resolution System, the Tribal Forest Protection Act, and Stewardship Contracting as tools for establishing long term economic and employment opportunities.
- The Chippewa NF co-sponsored a Tribal Relations training held on the Huron-Manistee National Forest.
- An all employees Heritage Day was held with Tribal Chair George Goggleye and Cass Lake Mayor Wayne LaDuke as keynote speakers.
- Four youth from the Leech Lake Reservation worked in the Youth Conservation Corps programs at Walker and Deer River Districts. A total of eight YCC workers were hired.

2008

The results of the 2008 Tribal Primary Election overturned the Chairmanship ahead of the general election. Regular meetings continue with the Band's Division of Resource Management director or the Tribal Chair to identify issues and move forward on those where agreement exists. Consultation is ongoing with 13 Local Indian Councils on future planning and current implementation efforts and identification of any historic sites or traditional uses within the project areas, or concerns with the projects. All three resource management NEPA analyses planned for this year lie within the reservation boundary.

2008 Tribal Relations activities:

- With a part-time tribal liaison established in 2007, the National Forest and the Band agreed to a tribal relations program of work for 2008 - 09 emphasizing outreach and recruitment, partnership building, developing mutual cultural awareness, and initiating development of an MOU.
- The Chippewa National Forest and the Leech Lake Band have explored options to establish long term economic capability through an Indian Dispute Resolution Services program to utilize the Tribal Forest Protection Act and stewardship contracting. Further development of a forest-based economy may grow as a priority for the Leech Lake Band in the future.
- A stewardship contract between the Blackduck District and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) will reforest 7 permanent openings (14 acres) during 2008.
- Forest Supervisor Rob Harper and Leech Lake Tribal Chair George Goggleye signed a cooperative agreement in July 2007 to clean up illegal waste sites in key riparian areas of Chippewa National Forest using the skills of the Leech Lake Public Works Department and CNF

Soil/Water expertise. Community education and communication are also components of the effort. The first site was completed in September 2007.

- The Forest Tribal Liaison and the Leech Lake Band's Dept of Public Works jointly presented the Dumpsite Cleanup project at the Minnesota Tribal Conference in Onamia, MN.
- Contracts with the Leech Lake Band in 2006 and 2007 provided work for tribal members who increased the Chippewa's seed bank of woody species at the J.W. Toumey Nursery.
- Chippewa National Forest is also working with the Red Lake Nation to develop an Ojibwe language immersion youth camp reutilizing the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Rabideau National Historic Landmark during 2008.

2009 Tribal Relations activities:

- The National Forest and the Band jointly received a Forest Service Eastern Region Honor Award for cooperatively implementing a riparian dumpsite clean up program and completing 41 sites.
- Established a formal Agreement to utilize the Leech Lake Temporary Employment Program that was immediately implemented.
- Integrated ideas on Economic Recovery proposals resulted in co-sponsoring a Chainsaw Training course for band members in March in support of potential Economic Recovery projects.
- Of 37 new agreements in 2008, one-third (11) were new or renewed Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements with local fire departments and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. To date in 2009, 9 new agreements with the Leech Lake Band are developing focused on implementing the Temporary Employment Program, road decommissioning, roads maintenance and improvement, trail development, chainsaw training and Heritage survey work.
- Established internships for Leech Lake Tribal College students through the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program.
- Developing educational experiences for Cass Lake High School students in the successful transition to academic rigor and preparation (STAR) extra-curricular program.